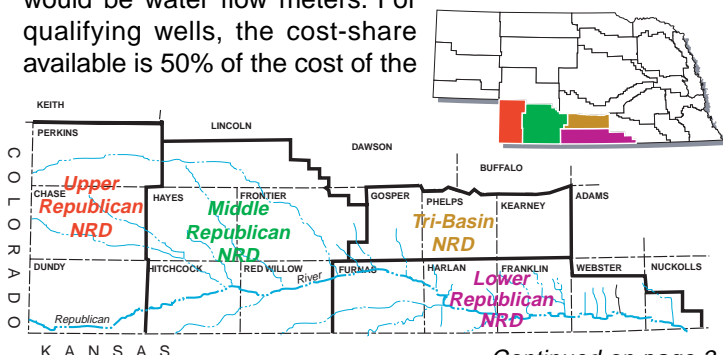




Republican River Alluvial Wells

By Gayle Starr

The **Republican Basin** alluvium water meter program, established by the Legislature as part of LB 1161, is now operational. LB 1161 and the accompanying "A" bill provided a \$500,000 appropriation to the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund administered by the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission to cost-share on the installation of water measuring devices on wells in the Republican River alluvium. The program rules and regulations adopted by the Commission and approved by the Attorney General and Governor specified that the only "water measuring device" that would be eligible for cost-share dollars would be water flow meters. For qualifying wells, the cost-share available is 50% of the cost of the

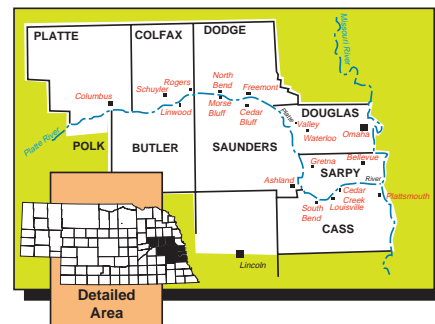


Continued on page 3

Commission Assists on Feasibility Study

By Steve Gaul

The Natural Resources Commission is assisting on a \$2.7 million multi-agency effort to investigate flood damage reduction and water resources related problems and solutions along the Lower Platte. The **Lower Platte River and Tributaries Feasibility Study** is examining structural and non-structural means of addressing floodplain needs. Concerns related to water quality, land use, environmental restoration, and public policy as well as soliciting public suggestions on natural resources management issues will also be addressed. The study was initiated last January and is scheduled for completion by June 2001. The study area includes the Platte River from Columbus to its mouth as well as some



Continued on page 3

Natural Resources Commission Approves Second LB 1085 Report

By Steve Gaul

In its August 20 meeting the Natural Resources Commission approved its second and final report of a study of Nebraska's natural resources districts required by LB 1085 (1996). The report is entitled **"An Analysis of Natural Resources District: Program Effectiveness, Cost Effectiveness, Duplication of Responsibility, and Other Options for Facilitating Property Tax Relief"**. In assembling the report the Commission surveyed natural resources district managers, municipalities, and county boards of supervisors and commissioners about cooperative efforts with NRDs, potential ways to improve NRD assistance, and related matters.

The Commission's major conclusion was that *"... natural resources districts have generally operated efficiently and effectively with little duplicative effort. Administrative mechanisms to spread ideas and discuss potential duplication are already in place"*.

The Commission also found that: *"A major strength of the natural resources district system is that it is based upon local units of government which can be responsive to local voter preferences, local needs, and the vast differences in natural resources and natural resource issues between districts. A district, for instance, may allocate its efforts to soil conservation, groundwater management, watershed structures or even trails or rural water systems in a manner which would be completely inappropriate for a different district, but is in line with voter preferences and the needs of that particular district."*

This extends to relations with other units of government. What might be duplication in one district could be needed cooperative effort in another. Statutory changes that could cause the districts to march in lockstep in order to avoid potential duplication, could also limit the practical

Continued on page 2

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

I had a recent opportunity to visit with Brian Scarsbrick, Chief Executive of Landcare Australia Limited. Mr. Scarsbrick was making several visits throughout the United States to gather information on soil and water conservation programs in the United States.

Australia uses a much different approach to soil and water conservation than we do in the United States. While they have needs for conservation probably equal or greater than ours, the work is approached on a catchment (watershed) basis with regional themes, rather than on individual farms or ranches. While this approach is becoming more common in the U.S., the major difference is the Australian corporate structure support. Landcare Australia Limited is a government endorsed, non-profit public company. The company has ties with many large corporate groups and taking part in this effort brings commercial benefits for corporate sponsors while assisting in developing the landcare ethic nationwide.

With this strong corporate backing, two out of three people are aware of the program and there is great enthusiasm for 'landcare'. Considerable financial support comes from the corporate leaders. To name a few of those we recognize in the United States; McDonald's Family Restaurants, Monsanto Australia Ltd. and the Ford Motor Company of Australia Ltd.

Beside all of the corporate backing, Landcare has 33 Australian celebrities providing landcare tips on national radio, telecom phone cards and a landcare project featured on the front cover of telephone directories and the Australian Prime Minister taking a very active part and promoting landcare in many ways.

While this program has been in existence for the last several years, observers conclude, "It has been a leap forward in terms of co-operation and participation by concentrating on groups rather than individual landowners." In short, they are getting results.

It was a great pleasure to visit with Brian Scarsbrick and his wife Joanne. She incidentally is the chairperson of one of the catchment areas providing a leading effort in getting conservation practices on the land. The Scarsbricks came to Nebraska with an interest in our NRD system and also visited with Steve Oltmans at the Papio-Missouri River NRD during their stay in Nebraska.



(1085 Report Con't)

nuts and bolts opportunity for cooperation and getting things done at the local level. We believe that practical responsiveness to "what works" at the local level was a major reason the districts were created."

The Commission did suggest **seven potential changes** that would be most likely to enhance NRDs through restructuring and cost efficiencies. These included:

1. Natural Resources Districts should provide city, county, and village governments with information on NRD activities at least once every two years in order to account for electoral turnover.
2. Natural Resources District Directors and staff should participate in continuing leadership training. Continuing staff training in financial management, personnel management, administration, and project/program management is also recommended.
3. Natural Resources Districts should share computer equipment, specialized machinery, personnel, and expertise between districts and with other units of government.

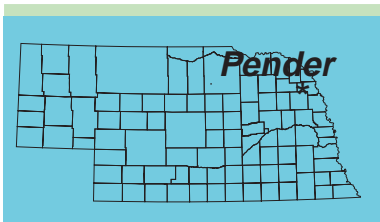
4. Natural Resources Districts should examine the idea of adopting a toll free number and implement this option if or where cost effective.

5. Natural Resources Districts should be exempted from sales tax.

6. The Federal government is mandating co-location of field offices for the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service as well as other USDA agencies. Natural Resources Districts should have input to the consolidation process, in part because of the funds districts provide for the clerks in those offices. Those consolidations may free up some currently committed funds.

7. Drainage districts that have been inactive for more than four years should be officially disbanded.

This was the second report in response to LB 1085. On September 1, 1997 the Commission issued a report entitled "*An Analysis of Natural Resources District Revenue Base, Board Sizes, and Potential for Boundary Changes or Consolidation*".



Pender Project Construction Report

By Tom Pesek

On October 9, 1998, Commission staff along with representatives of the Department of Roads, Department of Environmental Quality, and the Game and Parks Commission had the opportunity to view construction of the Pender Flood Control Project. Representatives of the Village of Pender, the Lower Elkhorn NRD, the Corps of Engineers, and the contractor, Industrial Builders, Inc., of Fargo, North Dakota, also participated in the tour.

The Pender Flood Control Project is a Section 205 project planned, designed, and principally

funded by the Corps of Engineers. The project will protect Pender from the 385-year flood event on Logan Creek and primarily consists of levee construction, including a concrete flood-wall section, two state highway closure structures, and a detention basin. The Lower Elkhorn NRD is also assisting with the non-federal costs and SIMPCO (Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council) is assisting Pender administratively with the project. Total project costs are \$5,295,850 with the Nebraska Resources Development Fund providing \$913,293 - 60% of the non-federal cost.

Project construction began this spring with completion originally scheduled for the fall of 1999. Earthwork for the levee is basically completed, the floodwall (which was lengthened by the Corps during preparation of the final plans and specs) is nearing completion and excavation of the detention basin is about 50% completed. Project construction costs were benefitted by a favorable construction bid and the contractor has coordinated its work well with Village officials and the residents of Pender. Project construction is markedly ahead of schedule and if the weather holds this fall, nearly all work will be completed before winter shutdown with minor concrete work, fencing, and seeding to be completed next spring.

(Feasibility Study Con't)

adjacent tributaries. Problems with past flooding combined with the proximity of a high proportion of the state's population and expected population growth lend importance to the river corridor. Much of the state's drinking water supply and many of its major recreation resources are also located in the river corridor area.

Half of the study cost is being supplied through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The other half is being supplied through in-kind contributions from state and local sources, including the Natural Resources Commission, the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance, the Lower Platte South NRD, the Papio-Missouri River NRD and the Lower Platte North NRD. In addition, the Commission is providing major pass through funding from a legislative appropriation for the study.

The Commission's in-kind staff work for the study includes extensive survey and mapping work. To date, the Commission's Floodplain Management Division has delivered cross-sections for the river corridor between Interstate 80 and Highway 77 at Fremont. The Commission is also in the process of providing detailed digital elevation modeling and mapping for the Fremont Lakes area. Other survey and mapping work will follow. In addition, the Commission is providing office space and staff assistance for a contractor hired as part of a study geographic information system effort. That effort will be used to produce and display a selection of resources related maps that can be used to illustrate the assets, problems, and potentials of the Lower Platte corridor. Other Commission work involves assistance in community flood mitigation planning efforts, public involvement, study management and general non-structural activity.

The Lower Platte Feasibility Study will follow-up and build on an earlier Corps reconnaissance level study that was requested by Governor Nelson because of the extensive flooding that occurred in 1993. It provided an initial indication of feasible projects in the Lower Platte region. Five specific potential structural measures are being studied in depth. They include: Clear Creek Levee improvement, Western Sarpy County Levee improvement, Union Dike improvement, Lake Wanahoo Reservoir, and a Fremont Channel cutoff. Non-structural options to be examined include: flood insurance, flood proofing, flood warning, floodplain zoning, and evacuation and relocation of structures. In order to involve local counties and communities in the key decisions that will come out of the study, the Lower Platte Corridor Alliance is holding a series of public meetings, workshops and events throughout the study process. These will be used to solicit input on local issues, needs, and concerns.

(Alluvial Wells Con't)

water meter and its installation. The law provides that each of the four NRD's involved must adopt a program requiring the installation of measuring devices on at least 90% of the eligible wells by April 1, 2001, and the four districts have each adopted a program. An additional requirement of the law is that if any NRD fails to reach the 90% goal, it will be expected to pay back whatever cost-share funds have been paid under this program in their district. The cost-share program is to last three years.

As required by the law the Republican River Basin alluvium has been delineated by the Department of Water Resources and a map of the delineated alluvium and a list of the registered wells located in that alluvium have been provided to each NRD.

The available funds are allocated among the four NRDs based on the number of alluvial wells in each district. The allocation for the first fiscal year is as follows;

Upper Republican	227 wells	\$42,414.05
Middle Republican	1,000 wells	205,343.80
Lower Republican	1,340 wells	250,373.69
Tri-Basin	10 wells	1,868.46



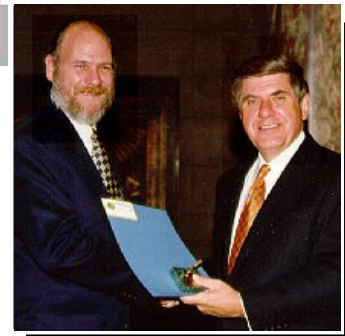
1 9 9 8

State of Nebraska Employee and Supervisor/Manager of the Year Awards

The month of October was proclaimed as **1998 State of Nebraska Employee Recognition Month** by Governor Nelson. A ceremony was held in the rotunda of the State Capital Building on October 23, 1998, honoring state employees and supervisor/managers of the year. Governor Nelson, presented two Natural Resources Commission staff members with Recognition Awards.

1998 NRC Supervisor/Manager of the Year

Presented with the agency's **Supervisor/Manager of the Year Award** was **Richard A. Kern**, a registered Professional Engineer with the Comprehensive Planning Division of the agency with 24 plus years of service to the state and Commission. Over the past year Rich, has worked with the Cooperative Hydrology Study as the agency's representative and Senior Database Coordinator for the study. The study is looking at the Platte Rivers in Nebraska from the Colorado and Wyoming borders to an area around Columbus, Nebraska. He is also Chairperson of the Technical Committee for the Resources Development Fund and sits on the Review Committee for the same fund. Another major project the last year included the development of a database used with the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund for summarizing accomplishments and preparing reports.



Rich, is one of those people who truly enjoys his job and the duties associated with the different aspects of the jobs he's assigned. When asked what he likes about his position there was no hesitation, "The challenge, new challenges and new things, there is always something new and different. I love working with computers and I have a lot of opportunities with the agency, freedom to work on different aspects. GIS (Geographic Information System) has provided a lot of new opportunities". Rich, is one of those people that others are always asking advice of, his expertise in the computer and related software fields is invaluable to the state, the agency, and his fellow employees.

In his spare time, at home, he has designed and maintains the web page and site for UN-L's Women Volleyball Team which has been voted the Nations #1 Collegiate Volleyball Web Site. Rich, receives a lot of compliments from the fans from both Nebraska and other states for the superb job he does in maintaining and updating the site.

1998 NRC Employee of the Year



Presented with the agency's **Employee of the Year Award** was **Daniel Kloch**, also with the Comprehensive Planning Division of the Commission. Dan, has been with the agency for ten years and has worked on a variety of projects during that time. The past several years he has been instrumental with coordinating the agency's effort to complete and certify approximately 1,500 DEMs (Digital Elevation Models). The process includes the scanning of USGS (U.S. Geological Survey) contour maps, checking the digital information for errors, correcting any errors that have occurred, generating a three-dimensional map of the area, and sending the completed jobs to USGS for certification. The DEMs are used to generate the state's approximately 6000 DOQQs (Digital Orthophoto Quarter Quadrangles). The finished data-

bases must be accurate and complete for the end maps to be of any value, and that has been Dan's duty.

Dan, is another employee who likes the challenge of his job and the work he performs shows that. According to Dan, "I enjoy the challenges, the people I work with, and what I do". Away from the office Dan enjoys woodworking, riding his Harley, and is in the process of rebuilding a 1940 Indian motorcycle.

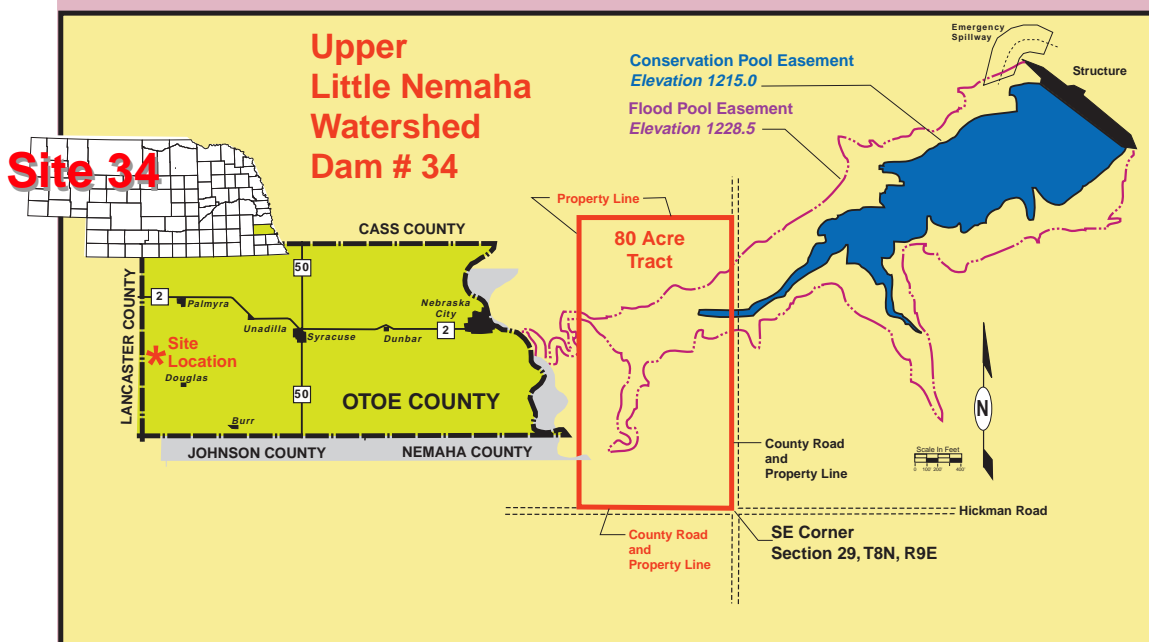
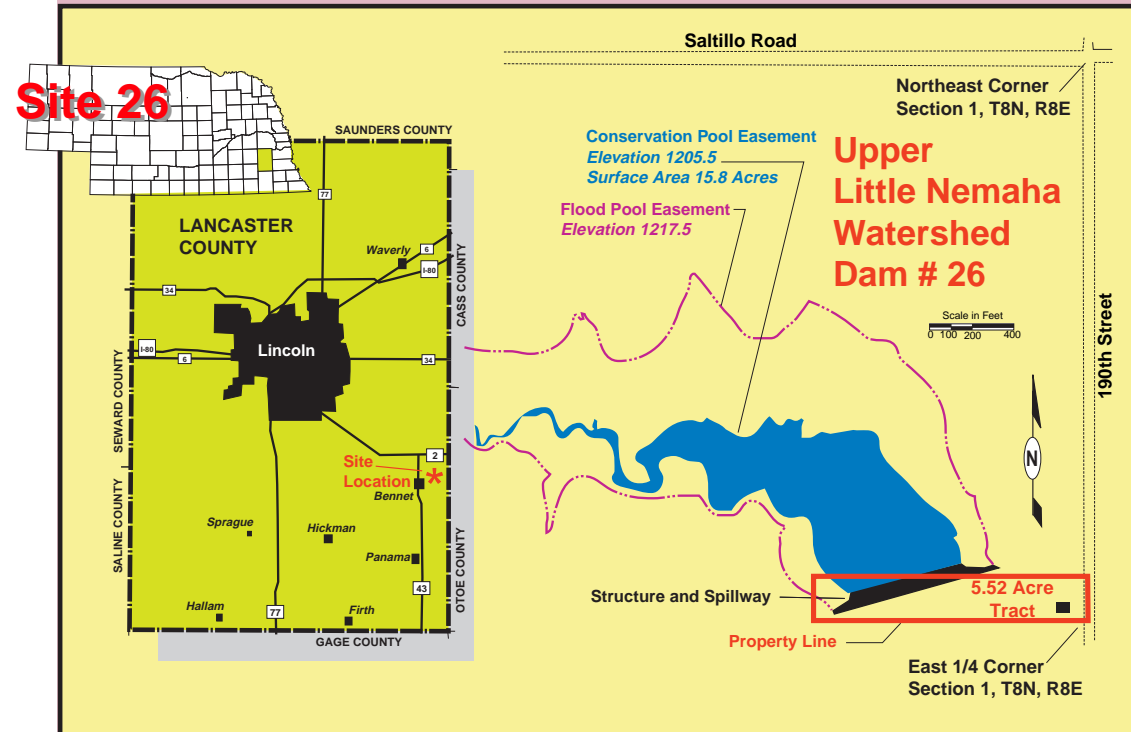
Both honored employees are an asset to the agency and a great help to their fellow employees. The Natural Resources Commission is proud to have employees like Rich and Dan and congratulate both of them on being honored and presented with their individual awards.

Land Auctions in January 1999

By Tom Pesek

Two tracts associated with flood control dams in the **Upper Little Nemaha Watershed Project** are scheduled for public auction on **January 13, 1999**. A 5.52 acre tract that includes a four-bedroom, ranch-style home, will be sold at 11:00 a.m. at the site (**Structure Site 26**), two miles east and one half mile

north of Bennet. The other tract is 80 acres and includes a mix of cropland, woodland, and hayland/pasture. This tract at **Site 34** is located approximately five miles south and two miles west of Palmyra and will be sold at 2:30 p.m. at the American Legion Building in Palmyra. Sale bills will be available in early December. The Commission will take action at its January 29, 1999, meeting to accept or reject the high bids received. The auction sales will be conducted by Don Vrana of Syracuse, Nebraska.



The above tracts were purchased by the Nemaha NRD with state funds provided by the Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund. The Natural Resources Commission is providing financial assistance for design and construction of the project through the Nebraska Resources Development Fund.

Length of Service Awards

Along with the recognition of outstanding employees during the month of October the state also recognizes state employees celebrating 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years of service to the state.

The Nebraska Natural Resources Commission had eight employees recognized with Length of Service Awards this year. Those employees recognized were: Dayle Williamson with 40 years of service, Terry Cartwright, Scott Ferguson, and Maggie Hoagstrom with 25 years of service, Brian Dunnigan, with 15 years of service, and Dan Kloch, Karen Kuster, and Kim Menke with 10 years of service.



STATE OF NEBRASKA

E. Benjamin Nelson, Governor

NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Dayle E. Williamson, Director
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94876
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4876
<http://www.nrc.state.ne.us>

Nebraska Resources is published quarterly by staff of the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission. Articles appearing in this newsletter are opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission unless specified. Your comments, suggestions or questions are welcomed by writing to the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission.